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CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER™

Concepts & Guidelines
for a
Horror Anthology Series
from Epic Comics

WHAT'S A "HELLRAISER"?

HELLRAISER was the first in a series of horror films by author/filmmaker **Clive Barker**. The first film detailed the plight of a family unfortunate enough to find the solution to a puzzle box, a literal Pandora's box called a Lament Configuration. In the process, they unwittingly threw open the doors to hell itself and placed themselves under siege by a host of demons called Cenobites.

HELLRAISER (available on video tape) has already spawned one sequel (**HELLBOUND**), with a third film (**HELL ON EARTH**) currently in production.

WELL THEN, WHAT'S "CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER"?

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER is a 64 page comic book horror anthology, to be published quarterly (four times a year) by Epic Comics.

Epic Comics enjoys a reputation for producing high-quality comics material on the cutting edge of the medium, providing stories and art to challenge and excite the mature reader. **CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER** will carry on the Epic tradition as a square bound comic (equivalent to **STRAY TOASTERS** and **HAVOK & WOLVERINE: MELTDOWN**), featuring camera ready artwork (fully painted, colored-for-repro, or blue-line color). Similar to other anthology magazines like *Issac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* and *Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone Magazine*, **CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER** will also have the benefit of creative input associated with the name in the logo - in our case, Clive Barker himself.

What makes ***CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER*** different from other horror anthologies is its basis in the ideas of Clive Barker. Using the concepts of Clive Barker's **HELLRAISER** series of movies as a common background gives our stories a foundation upon which to build. Much as authors such as Robert Bloch, Robert E. Howard and Frank Belknap Long expanded upon H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, writers and artists working for Epic can use ***CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER*** as an opportunity to extend the **HELLRAISER** legend. Using the unique qualities of the comics medium to blend words and images, creators can fashion stories and characters that interact and cross over each other, weaving an elaborate tapestry of tales and building a unique horrific mythology.

BUILDING A MYTHOS

With ***CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER***, there is the potential to overcome the pitfalls plaguing many horror comics. With a common tapestry to hang stories upon, and an ever growing backstory and cast of characters, it is possible to create a continuity and sense of ongoing story that is so popular with readers of book and comic series.

In addition, the mythological quality of the basic concepts (the puzzle box, the Cenobite demons, the larger forces working among mankind) provide the material for evocative, darkly disturbing stories...film noir horror, if you will. We should never have to fall back on the easy trap of so many comic horror anthologies, the "Bad Twilight Zone/EC Comics" shock story ("And she woke up the next morning to find that her husband -- in bed next to her -- had REALLY BEEN DEAD FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS!!!")

The stories should be working towards creating a mythological basis, that the box that summons the Cenobites and the Cenobites themselves have existed throughout history and worked their way into all manner of events through time: Influencing. Damning. Saving.

The comic stories should build on this mythology and the material provided from the films, fleshing out the backstories, delving into the types of stories that the films don't have the time to tell...or don't dare to tell.

THE CONCEPTS

LEVIATHAN

At the center of hell stands a perfect icon of evil, an enormous diamond shaped being call Leviathan.

Turning endlessly, Leviathan is the true creator of all the boxes and puzzles that lie scattered through the planes of reality; boxes and puzzles that, once solved, open the doorway to hell.

From its own "flesh", Leviathan sends out the material that will be fashioned by ordinary men into the puzzle-keys to the kingdom of hell. It can send its puzzles anywhere, any reality, any world. An alien being on another planet can pick up one of Leviathan's puzzles/boxes just as easily as the neighbor across the street.

Sentient, Leviathan holds a world inside itself, the final level of hell: a seething Escher-type world, an unreal reality filled with the

screaming souls of those foolish enough to unlock the puzzles and travel the corridors of hell. Not twisted enough to ever qualify as a Cenobite, these souls are simply fuel for Leviathan's pleasure. Occasionally, flashes of black light -- the manifestation of those tortured souls -- may burst out of Leviathan, washing over any individuals wandering through hell. The flip-side of the light of God, this black light reveals pain and guilt and sorrow -- emotions and memories which Leviathan enjoys using to manipulate its prey.

Leviathan sends out its boxes and puzzle to entice others to give their souls to the Escher-world within itself. Anybody can feed Leviathan's desire: the only criteria for succumbing to its ruse is the simple curiosity to solve the puzzle, and the simple desire to work at it until it is solved.

Those souls who do make the journey are trapped inside of Leviathan, and they're not happy. But Leviathan is...

DECLARING WAR ON THE FLESH

In many tales of horror, the denizens of the night threaten the orderly world of good with the chaos of evil. In the world of **CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER**, it is order which fuels the evil of Leviathan and it is chaos that acts as the delineator for Man and the forces of "good".

Leviathan and its world are a form of fascism. Structure. Order. There is a place for everything and everything in its place, and both those things and places are perfect. Structured. Orderly. From

Leviathan's perfect diamond shape, to the structured geometry of the puzzles it creates.

Mankind is not order -- mankind is flesh: malleable, constantly changing, growing in the glory of the chaos that is life.

Leviathan has declared war on the flesh because it does not fit into Leviathan's structured view of reality. The flesh must be tortured until it learns the meaning of structure. Of order. Only when man and his chaotic flesh have been subjugated to order will Leviathan be truly happy. In the meantime, it finds its small pleasures...

THE BOX

Referred to as a "Lament Configuration", a "LeMarchand Box", and a hundred other as-yet-unrevealed names, the box is more than just the key to the door that leads to hell: the box is a puzzle. Something that needs to be solved. Something that requires the desire of someone to work at it in order to unlock its secrets. Finally, with its secrets solved and its pieces in their places, the puzzle reveals something that wasn't evident before -- in this case, the reality of hell.

The box is only the latest puzzle created from the Leviathan-material, designed by a man named Phillip LeMarchand. Like other artists through time, LeMarchand had heard of a perfect material in which to work, a perfect medium in which to express his talents. And like other damned artists through time, LeMarchand never dreamed just what it was he would create with that most perfect, most *orderly* material...

Leviathan took LeMarchand's puzzle boxes (as it had taken all the puzzles before his) and scattered the boxes through time and space, spreading 10,000 keys to hell through all of creation.

The puzzles wait, each indestructible and watched over by a guardian angel -- or, in this case, demon: a creature blending in with those around it (as the grumpy guy at the newsstand, as the hairdresser on the corner, as little Tommy's unruly housecat -- in the first **HELLRAISER** film, the weird old bum wandering around is that box's guardian), each guardian seeing that each box reaches the hands of a prospective candidate for hell.

Each box is unique for each person, a different puzzle requiring a different solution, a solution that is a *ritual*. It can never be easy to solve the box; it is something someone has to work at, and something someone has to want.

Like H.P. Lovecraft's Necronomicon, the idea of Leviathan's puzzles should take on a life of their own, pervading everything around them. Any puzzle, anywhere, should begin to make both the characters in the stories and our readers slightly neurotic: worried as to what will happen should they solve it...

CENOBITES

If Leviathan is the field general in the war against the flesh, then the Cenobites are its shock troops, carrying out Leviathan's commands in the ongoing battle.

They were once human, and in their desire to experience *more* than the reality they knew they chose to open the box, eager for the journey to hell. Many arrive in hell to find they only qualify as fodder for Leviathan's pleasure; but in the truly deranged individuals Leviathan sees the potential for agents who can carry his war further. The guilt-ridden twisted stuff of their psyches make them perfect material to be refashioned by Leviathan within on its Cenobite creation chambers.

Within the chambers, flesh is removed and restructured, body parts taken apart and re-ordered. Abilities of finished Cenobites are wide and varied, manifesting from attributes possessed by the pre-damned individual (for example, in **HELLBOUND**, the second **HELLRAISER** film, a prominent surgeon enters the legions of Leviathan's troops. The resulting Cenobite had a proclivity for cutlery). Obviously, the more twisted and guilt ridden the source material, the better the finished Cenobite.

Cenobites forms are humainoid, but this is the human form taken to an *extreme* -- their appearances should be so far removed from the norm that the eye *can't* look away. With their blue-grey skin and uniquely regal dress, they are the **SS** of the damned.

Cenobites have "pets" to assist them, more aggressive than their masters. These pets are made up of flesh pulled from the spirits wailing around inside Leviathan, literal flesh sculptures: bits and pieces carved apart and melted together to form yet another extreme. Always keep in mind that both the Cenobites and their pets are far more than imps with sharp teeth and forked tails -- they're more like the reanimated stuff of several monsters that went up in a flaming car wreck.

Unlike many horror monsters, the Cenobites have a specific purpose: containing the "fronts" of hell's war on mankind. They are charged by Leviathan not only with gaining new ground and souls, but also with holding the positions they've already won. Souls that have been foolish enough to open a box must be ushered in to the pleasures of hell...and souls that have slipped through the cracks to escape need to be recaptured.

In the course of carrying out their duty, the Cenobites are allowed to strike bargains (as in the film **HELLRAISER**, where the Cenobite Pinhead agrees to let one character go in exchange for another). These bargains are Faustian in their nature, and the Cenobites are bound to the specifics of each agreement. Because they are bound to the specifics, the Cenobites can be cheated...but that probably wouldn't make them very happy.

HELL ITSELF

The backdrop for the charming cast and creatures of **CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER** is no Judao-Christian hell, no multi-tiered

Inferno. It is instead a place filled with cross-cultural references: every story of hell from every land and peoples is represented here. But the damned don't go to the hell they expect: A Jew might go to a Christian hell. A Christian might be made to suffer in an Islamic pit of torture. Hell is the place where everything you ever believed in is proved to be wrong -- forever.

Hell is filled with areas not-unlike waiting rooms: places occupied by those who actually searched for the box, slaved to open it, *wanted* to go to hell...but once there they found out they didn't yet fit in. Lacking the truly twisted qualities to become Cenobites immediately, these not-quite damned are persecuted while simultaneously being charged with luring more souls down from above; only in this way can they prove they are worthy of becoming Cenobites (again, by way of example: in **HELLBOUND**, the character of Frank is trapped in such a waiting room, tortured by images of sexuality he can't touch while he plots to lure his niece to hell. Another character, Julia, is allowed to journey back to the "real" world to lure in more cannon fodder).

But for all of Leviathan's desire for order and perfection, and for the steadfast jackbooting of the Cenobites, hell is imperfect: it is a sieve, bits and pieces of it slipping through the cracks and escaping to our reality.

Which is where we get our stories...

THE STORIES

THEMES

The overall theme of *CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER* is one of Transformation -- of a character seeing/encountering something that, up until this very moment, he or she could not possibly conceive; and in that encounter, the character is changed, physically and/or mentally, so he or she can no longer go back to their old lives. The world they thought they knew is forever changed from what they have learned/experienced; sort of the dark side of Joseph Campbell's heroic cycle.

The themes that the horror is based on are not necessarily tied to specific Judao-Christian concepts. Good and evil exist, but they are much more than just "God" and "The Devil" and they are not always clear cut concepts. They are, instead, part of a much larger framework; rapture and damnation are always possible in this universe, but their instruments are not always angels, demons or Cenobites. The true keys that unleash things -- both terrible and wonderful -- come from inside our characters, not from outside forces.

IN GENERAL...

There are a few points we'd like to keep under consideration in creating stories for *CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER*:

- 1) The stories should never play it safe; they should always be reaching to press the buttons that will evoke a reaction from a reader,

challenging him or her, getting under their skins...and pulling them off from the inside. The stories can create a sense of wonder, or a sense of terror, they can be something people will love or something people will hate...but they should never be mediocre. The last thing we want is someone saying, "HELLRAISER? Yeah, it was *okay*...".

2) In the course of the stories, there should be ever more questions than answers; concentrate on creating questions to keep the readers interested. For every one question answered, the stories should try to create two new questions -- a sense of mystery and foreboding should always be evident; if the reader gets all the answers or feels there's nothing new to discover, there's no reason to expect them to keep reading.

3) Horror stories obviously present the potential for depicting scenes that are both violent and graphic, especially in the comics medium where we are limited neither by special effects budgets or the same restrictions as a film ratings board. But horror is as much atmosphere and approach as it is the Thing in the closet with the razors where its eyes should be. Violence and strong graphic images are fine -- as long as both these things work as **part of the story**. Neither of these things -- separately or together -- should ever **be** the story.

4) Perhaps the most important thing we should consider in telling our stories is the storytelling itself. In order for horror to affect our readers, it must be accessible to them -- they have to know what's happening in order to be frightened by it. A clearly told story should always be foremost in our minds, especially in light of the limited number of pages available for each story in an anthology.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We're looking for horror in all its forms: tales that disturb with the mood they evoke, stories that thrill with visceral tension...and everything in between.

Over the first year, we'd like to work at establishing some of the more basic hows and whys of the Cenobites and the boxes; this will lay the groundwork for where we'd like to be by the end of the fourth issue: with a peek at Leviathan and its hows and whys, suggesting to our readers that there's more to hell than has met their eyes thus far.

In the course of getting to that point, we'd like to see new Cenobites. New puzzles. Stories that hint at things in hell we haven't even begun to have nightmares about.

Each issue will contain (on the average) four 15 page stories. However, there will certainly be issues made up of collections of shorter and/or longer tales. You're encouraged to develop stories of the length that you're comfortable with...but please check with us first.

We're also looking for cover art, along with interior front and end pieces (to hit the reader hard when they open the book, and leave them reeling once they've finished). Since these front/end pieces and the cover illustration are the most immediately visible, we'd like to see the art of these pieces act as a bridge between the movies and our own medium -- reflecting the imagery and icons of the films, but stretching them and making them unique to comics.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Since the premise and concepts of ***CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER*** are copyrighted by Clive Barker, the working arrangement for the series falls under the banner of work-for-hire.

Established Marvel rates will apply to art and writing; if you don't have a Marvel rate currently available, Epic will set up an equivalent rate for all ***CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER*** material you may work on.

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER is under the Marvel incentive plan, set up similarly to ***MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS***: the incentive for a particular issue is split up equally among the writer/artist teams working on that issue.

FINALLY...

It's our hope that this small sampling of concepts and ideas has piqued your interest in the project; should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you, and to working together in raising some hell in the coming year.